The first of these two lectures, "Existentialism," was delivered by Professor Strauss fourteen years earlier than the second one, "The problem of Socrates." They are, however, related to one another by their common concern to understand and to respond to the thought of Heidegger. Indeed, they are Professor Strauss's most extensive public statements about Heidegger, at least so far as we know, and we have accordingly chosen to present them here together.

Existentialism

LEO STRAUSS

According to Dr. Victor Gourevitch, whose own lecture on Existentialism is referred to by Professor Strauss in the text, this lecture was delivered in February, 1956, at the Hillel Foundation of the University of Chicago. The lecture was available to the editors in a copy of a typescript with additions, corrections, and alterations by Professor Strauss's own hand. The original of this typescript, with Professor Strauss's revisions, can be found in the Strauss archives at the University of Chicago. We have chosen to present the revised version in the text, while indicating in notes what the revisions were. However, where Professor Strauss merely corrected a typographical mistake, or where he added a comma or made other small changes of punctuation, we have presented only the corrected version. We have also taken the liberty of correcting, without comment, a few misspellings in the typescript. We are grateful to Heinrich and Wiebke Meier for their most generous help in deciphering Professor Strauss's handwriting.

A more heavily edited version of this lecture, based on a typescript that differs, in part, from the one we used, and on a copy that gives no indication of having been seen by Professor Strauss, was previously published, under the title "An Introduction to Heideggerian Existentialism," in The Rebirth of Classical Political Rationalism: An Introduction to the Thought of Leo Strauss *(Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989 [© 1989 by The University of Chicago]), pp. 27–46. We have noted in an epilogue what appear to us to be the most important divergences between the earlier version and the present one.*

This series of lectures—a reminder of the perplexities of modern man—should help the Jewish students in particular towards facing the perplexities of the modern Jew with somewhat greater clarity. Existentialism has reminded many people that thinking is incomplete and defective if the thinking being, the thinking individual, forgets himself as what he is. It is the old Socratic warning. Compare[1] Theodorus in the Theaetetus, the purely theoretic, purely objective man who loses himself completely in the contemplation of mathematical objects, who knows nothing about himself and his fellow men, in particular about his own defects. The thinking[2] man is not a pure mind, a pointer-reading observer, for instance. The[3] question what am I, or who am I cannot be answered by science, for this would mean that there are some self-forgetting

Theodoruses who have gotten hold of the limits of the human soul by means of scientific method. For if they have not done so, if their results are necessarily provisional, hypothetical, it is barely possible that what we can find out by examining ourselves and our situation honestly, without the pride and the pretence of scientific knowledge, is more helpful than science.

[4]Existentialism is a school of philosophic thought. The name is not like Platonism, Epicureanism, and Thomism. Existentialism is a nameless movement like pragmatism or positivism. This is *deceptive*.[5] Existentialism owes its overriding significance to a single man: Heidegger. Heidegger alone brought about such a radical change in philosophic thought as is revolutionizing all thought in Germany, in continental Europe, and is beginning to affect even Anglo-Saxony. I am not surprised by this effect. I remember the impression he made on me when I heard him first as a young Ph.D. in 1922. Up to that time I had been particularly impressed, as many of my contemporaries in Germany were, by Max Weber, by Weber's[6] intransigent devotion to intellectual honesty, by his passionate devotion to the idea of science, a devotion that was combined with a profound uneasiness regarding the meaning of science. On my way north from Freiburg where Heidegger then taught, I saw in Frankfurt am Main Franz Rosenzweig whose name will always be remembered when informed people speak about Existentialism, and I told him of Heidegger. I said to him: in comparison with Heidegger, Weber appeared to me as an orphan child in regard to precision, and probing, and competence. I had never seen before such seriousness, profundity, and concentration in the interpretation of philosophic texts. I had heard Heidegger's interpretation of certain sections in Aristotle. Sometime later I heard Werner Jaeger in Berlin interpret the same texts. Charity compels me to limit the comparison to the remark[7] that there was no comparison. Gradually the breadth of the revolution of thought which Heidegger was preparing dawned upon me and my generation. We saw with our own eyes that there had been no such phenomenon in the world since Hegel. He succeeded in a very short time in dethroning the established schools of philosophy in Germany. There was a famous discussion between Heidegger and Ernst Cassirer in Davos which revealed the lostness and emptiness of this remarkable representative of established academic philosophy to everyone who had eyes. Cassirer had been a pupil of Hermann Cohen, the founder of the neo-Kantian school.[8] Cohen had elaborated a system of philosophy whose center was ethics. Cassirer had transformed Cohen's system into a new system of philosophy in which ethics had completely disappeared: it had been silently dropped: he had not *faced* the problem. Heidegger did face the problem. He declared that ethics is impossible and his whole being was permeated by the awareness that this fact opens up an abyss. Prior to Heidegger's emergence the most outstanding German philosopher—I would say the *only*[5] German philosopher—was Edmund Husserl. It was Heidegger's critique of Husserl's phenomenology which became decisive: precisely because that criticism consisted in a radicalization of Husserl's own question and questioning. Briefly, as[8] Husserl once said to me who had been trained in[9] the Marburg neo-Kantian school, the[10] neo-Kantians were superior to all other German philosophical schools, but they made the mistake of beginning with the roof. He meant: the primary theme of Marburg neo-Kantianism was the analysis of science. But science, Husserl taught, is derivative—from our primary knowledge of the world of things; science is not the perfection of man's understanding of the world, but a specific modification of that pre-scientific understanding. The meaningful genesis of science out of pre-scientific understanding is a *problem*; the primary theme is the philosophical understanding of the pre-scientific world and therefore in the first place the analysis of the sensibly perceived thing. According to Heidegger Husserl *himself*[5] began with the roof: the merely sensibly perceived thing is itself derivative; there are not first sensibly perceived things and thereafter the same things in a state of being valued or in a state of affecting us. Our primary understanding of the world is not an understanding of things as objects but of what the Greeks indicated[11] by *pragmata*, things which we handle and use.[12] The horizon within which Husserl had analyzed the world of pre-scientific understanding was the pure consciousness as the absolute being. Heidegger questioned that orientation by referring to the fact that the inner time belonging to the pure consciousness cannot be understood if one abstracts from the fact that this time is necessarily finite and even constituted by man's mortality. The same effect which Heidegger had in the late twenties and early thirties in Germany, he had very soon in continental Europe as a whole. There is no longer in existence a philosophic position apart from neo-Thomism and Marxism crude or refined. All rational[13] liberal philosophic positions have lost their significance and power. One may deplore this but I for one cannot bring myself to clinging to philosophic positions which have been shown to be[8] inadequate. I am[14] afraid that we shall have to make a very great effort in order to find a solid basis for rational liberalism. Only a great thinker could help us in our intellectual plight. But here is the great trouble, the only great thinker in our time is Heidegger.

The only question of importance of course is the question whether Heidegger's teaching is true or not. But the very question is deceptive because it is silent about the question of competence—of who is competent to judge. Perhaps only great thinkers are really competent to judge of[15] the thought of great thinkers. Kant[16] made a distinction between philosophers and those for whom philosophy is identical with the history of philosophy. He made a distinction, in other words, between the thinker and the scholar. I know that I am only a scholar. But I know also that most people that call themselves philosophers are mostly, at best, scholars. The scholar is radically dependent on the work of the great thinkers, of men who faced the problems without being covered[17] by any authority. The scholar is cautious, methodic, not bold. He does not become lost to our sight in, to us inaccessible heights and mists as the great thinkers do. Yet

while the great thinkers are so bold they are also much more cautious than we are; they see pitfalls where we are sure of our ground. We scholars live in a charmed circle, light-living like the Homeric gods, protected against the problems by the great thinkers. The scholar becomes possible through the fact that the great thinkers disagree. Their disagreement creates a possibility for us to reason about their differences—for wondering which of them is more likely to be right. We may think that the possible alternatives are exhausted by the great thinkers of the past. We may try to classify their doctrines and make a kind of herbarium and think that we look over them from a vantage point. But we cannot exclude the possibility that other great thinkers might arise in the future—in 2200 in Burma—the character[18] of whose thought has in no way been provided for by our schemata. For who are we to believe that we have found out the limits of human possibilities?[19] In brief, we are occupied with reasoning about the little we understand of[20] what the great thinkers have said.

The scholar faces the fundamental problems through the intermediacy of books. If he is a serious man through the intermediacy of the great books. The great thinker faces the problems directly.

I apply this to my situation in regard to Heidegger. A famous psychologist I saw in Europe, an old man, told me that in his view it is not yet possible to form a judgment about the significance as well as the truth of Heidegger's work. Because this work changed the intellectual orientation so radically[21] that a long long time is needed in order to understand with even tolerable adequacy and in a most general way[22] what this work means. The more I understand what Heidegger is aiming at the more I see how much still escapes me. The most stupid thing I could do would be to close my eyes or to reject his work.

There is a not altogether unrespectable justification for doing so. Heidegger became a Nazi in 1933. This was not due to a mere error of judgment on the part of a man who lived on great heights high above the lowland[23] of politics. Everyone who had read his first great book and did not overlook the wood for the trees could see the kinship in temper and direction between Heidegger's thought and the Nazis. What was the practical, that is to say serious meaning of the contempt for reasonableness and the praise of resoluteness which permeated the work[24] except to encourage that extremist movement? When Heidegger was rector of the University of Freiburg in 1933 he delivered an official speech in which he identified himself with the movement which then swept Germany. Heidegger has not yet dared to mention that speech in the otherwise complete list of his writings, which appear from time to time on the book jackets of his recent publications. Yet[8] in 1953[25] he published a book, lectures given in 1935, in which he spoke of the greatness and dignity of the National Socialist movement. In the preface written in 1953[25] he said that all mistakes had been corrected. The case of Heidegger reminds to a certain extent of the case of Nietzsche. Nietzsche, naturally, would not have sided with Hitler. Yet there is an undeniable kinship between Nietzsche's thought and fascism. If one rejects

as passionately as Nietzsche did[26] the conservative constitutional monarchy as well as democracy with a[27] view to a new aristocracy, the passion of the denials will be much more effective than the necessarily more subtle intimations of the character of the new nobility. To[28] say nothing of his[29] blond beast. Passionate political action against such things is absolutely in order but it is not sufficient. It is not even politically sufficient. Are there no dangers threatening democracy not only from without but from within as well? Is there no problem of democracy, of industrial mass democracy? The official high priests of democracy with their amiable reasonableness were not reasonable enough to prepare us for our situation: the decline of Europe, the danger to the west, to the whole western heritage which is at least as great and even greater than that which threatened Mediterranean civilization around 300 of the Christian era. It is childish to believe that the U.N. organization is an answer even to the political problem. And[30] within democracy: it suffices to mention the name of France—[31] *and*[5] the commercials *and*[5] logical positivism with their indescribable vulgarity. They have indeed the merit of not sending men into concentration camps and gas chambers, but is the absence of these unspeakable evils sufficient? Nietzsche once described the change which had been effected in the second half of the nineteenth century in continental Europe as follows.[32] The reading of the morning prayer had been replaced by the reading of the morning paper: not every day the same thing, the same reminder of men's absolute duty and exalted destiny, but every day something new with no reminder of duty and exalted destiny. Specialization, knowing more and more about less and less, practical impossibility of concentration upon the very few essential things upon which man's wholeness entirely depends—this[33] specialization compensated by sham universality, by the stimulation of all kinds of interests and curiosities without true passion, the danger of universal philistinism and creeping conformism. Or let me look for a moment at the Jewish problem. The nobility of Israel is literally beyond praise, the only bright spot for the contemporary Jew who knows where he comes from. And yet Israel does not afford a solution to the Jewish problem. "The Judaeo-Christian tradition"? This means to blur and to conceal grave differences. Cultural pluralism can only be had it seems at the price of blunting all edges.

It would be wholly unworthy of us as thinking beings not to listen to the critics of democracy even if they are enemies of democracy—provided they are thinking men and especially great thinkers and not blustering fools.

As you may recall from Mr. Gourevitch's lecture, Existentialism appeals to a certain experience (anguish) as the basic experience in the light of which everything must be understood. Having this experience is one thing; regarding it as the basic experience is another thing. Its basic character is not guaranteed by the experience itself. It can only be guaranteed by *argument*.[5] This argument may be invisible because it is implied in what is generally admitted in our time. What is generally admitted may imply, but only imply a fundamental uneasi-

ness which is vaguely felt but not faced. Given this context, the experience to which Existentialism refers will appear as a revelation, as the revelation, as the authentic interpretation of the fundamental uneasiness. But something more is required which however is equally generally admitted in our time: the vaguely felt uneasiness must be regarded as essential to man, and not only to *present*[5] day man. Yet this vaguely felt uneasiness is distinctly a present day phenomenon. Let us assume however that this uneasiness embodies what all earlier ages have thought, is the *result* of what earlier ages have thought; in that case the vaguely felt uneasiness is the mature fruit of all earlier human efforts: no return to an older interpretation of that uneasiness is possible. Now this is a second view generally accepted today (apart from the fundamental uneasiness which is vaguely felt but not faced); this second element is the belief in progress.

I have already referred to the well known expression 'we know more and more about less and less.' What does this mean? It means that modern science has not kept the promise which it held out from its beginning up to the end of the nineteenth century: that it would reveal to us the true character of the universe and the truth about man. You have in the *Education of Henry Adams* a memorable document of the change in the character and in the claim of science which made itself felt in the general public towards the end of the last century and which has increased since, in momentum and sweep. You all know the assertion that value-judgments are impermissible to the scientist in general and to the social scientist in particular. This means certainly that while science has increased man's power in ways that former men never dreamt of, it is absolutely incapable to tell men how to *use*[5] that power. Science cannot tell him whether it is wiser to use that power wisely and beneficently or foolishly and devilishly. From this it follows that science is unable to establish its own meaningfulness or to answer the question whether and in what sense science is good. We are then confronted with an enormous apparatus whose bulk is ever increasing, but[8] which in itself has no meaning. If a scientist would say as Goethe's Mephisto still said that science and reason is man's highest power, he would be told that he was not talking as a scientist but was[34] making a value judgment which from the point of view of science is altogether unwarranted. Someone has spoken of a flight from scientific reason. This flight is not due to any perversity but to science itself. I dimly remember the time when people argued as follows: to deny the possibility of science or rational value judgments means to admit that all values are of equal rank; and this means that respect for all values, universal tolerance, is the dictate of scientific reason. But this time has gone. Today we hear that no conclusion whatever can be drawn from the equality of all values; that science does not legitimate nor indeed forbid that we should draw rational conclusions from scientific findings. The assumption that we should act rationally and therefore turn to science for reliable information—[31] this assumption is wholly outside of the purview and interest of science proper. The flight from scientific reason is[35] the consequence of the flight *of*[5] science

from[5] reason—from the notion that man is a rational being who perverts his being if he does not act rationally. It goes without saying that a science which does not allow of value judgments has no longer any possibility of speaking of progress except in the humanly irrelevant sense of scientific progress: the concept of progress has accordingly been replaced by the concept of change. If science or reason cannot answer the question of why science is good, of why sufficiently gifted and otherwise able people fulfill a duty in devoting themselves to science, science says in effect that the choice of science is not rational: one may choose with equal right pleasing and otherwise satisfying myths. Furthermore, science does no longer conceive of itself as the perfection of the human understanding[36]; it admits that it is based on fundamental hypotheses which will always remain hypotheses. The whole structure of science does not rest on evident necessities. If this is so, the choice of the scientific orientation is as groundless as the choice of any alternative orientation. But what else does this mean except that the reflective scientist discovers as the ground of his science and his choice of science—a[8] groundless choice—an abyss. For a scientific interpretation of the choice of the scientific orientation, on the one hand, and the choice of alternative orientations, on the other, presupposes already the acceptance of the scientific orientation. The fundamental freedom is the only non-hypothetical phenomenon. Everything else rests on that fundamental freedom. We are already in the midst of Existentialism.

Someone might say that science by itself as well as poor and stupid positivism are of course helpless against the Existentialist onslaught. But do we not have a rational philosophy which takes up the thread where science and positivism drop it, and for which poetic, emotional Existentialism is no match?[19] I have asked myself for a long time where do I find that rational philosophy?[19] If I disregard the neo-Thomists, where do I find today the philosopher who dares to say that he is in possession of the true metaphysics and the true ethics which reveal to us in a rational, universally valid way the nature of being and the character of the good life?[19] Naturally we can sit at the feet of the great philosophers of old, of Plato and of Aristotle. But who can dare to say that Plato's doctrine of ideas as he intimated it, or Aristotle's doctrine of the *nous* that does nothing but think itself and is essentially related to the eternal visible universe, is the true teaching?[19] Are those like myself who are inclined to sit at the feet of the old philosophers not exposed to the danger of a weak-kneed eclecticism which will not withstand a single blow on the part of those who are competent enough to remind them of the singleness of purpose and of inspiration that characterizes every thinker who deserves to be called great?[19] Considering the profound disagreement among the great thinkers of the past, is it possible to appeal to them without blunting all edges? The place of rational philosophy proper is taken more and more by what was called in the country of its origin Weltanschauungslehre, theory of comprehensive views. In this stage it is admitted that we cannot refer to the true metaphysical and ethical teaching avail-

able in any of the great thinkers of the past. It is admitted that[37] there are n ways of answering the fundamental questions, that there are n types of absolute presuppositions as Collingwood called them, none of which can be said to be rationally superior to any other. This means to abandon the very idea of the truth as a rational philosophy has always understood it. It means just as in the case of the social scientists[38] that the choice of any of these presuppositions is groundless; we are thus led[39] again to the abyss of freedom. To say nothing of the fact that any such doctrine of comprehensive views presupposes that the fundamental possibilities are available or that fundamental human creativity is at its end. Furthermore there is a radical disproportion between the analyst of comprehensive views who does not face the fundamental questions directly and does not even recognize them in their primary meaning, viz. as pointing to one answer only, and the great thinkers themselves. He is separated from them by a deep gulf which is created by his pretended knowledge of the utopian character of original philosophy itself. How can we possibly believe that[40] he is in a position to understand the thinkers as they want to be understood and as[8] they must have been understood if one is to order and tabulate their teachings. We are sufficiently familiar with the history of moral philosophy in particular in order not to be taken in for one moment by the pious hope that while there may be profound disagreements among the rational philosophers in all other respects, that they will happily agree regarding human conduct. There is only one possible way out of the predicament in which the doctrine[41] of comprehensive views finds itself and that is to find the ground of the variety of comprehensive views in the human soul or more generally stated in the human condition. If one takes this[8] indispensable step one is again already at the threshold of Existentialism.

There is another very common way of solving the so-called value problem. People say that we must adopt values and that it is natural for us to adopt the values of our society. Our[42] values are our highest principles if the meaning of science itself depends on values. Now it is impossible to overlook the relation of the *principles*[5] of our society to our *society*[5], and the dependence of the principles on the society. This means generally stated that the principles, the so-called categorial system or the essences are rooted ultimately in the particular, in something which exists. Existence precedes essence. For what else do people mean when they say, e.g. that the Stoic natural law teaching is rooted in or relative to the decay of the Greek polis and the emergence of the Greek empire?[19]

As I said,[43] sometimes people try to avoid the difficulty indicated by saying that we have to adopt the values of our society. This is altogether impossible for serious men. We cannot help raising the question as to the value of the values of our society. To accept the values of one's society because they are the values of one's society means simply to shirk one's responsibility, not to face the situation that everyone has to make his own choice, to run away from one's

self. To find the solution to our problem in the acceptance of the values of our society, because they are the values of our society means to make philistinism a duty and to make oneself oblivious to the difference between true individuals and whitened sepulchres.

The uneasiness which today is felt but not faced can be expressed by a single word: relativism. Existentialism admits the truth of relativism but it realizes that relativism so far from being a solution or even a relief, is deadly. Existentialism is the reaction of serious men to their own relativism.

Existentialism begins then with the realization that as the ground of all objective, rational knowledge we discover an abyss. All truth, all meaning is seen in the last analysis to have no support except man's freedom. Objectively there is in the last analysis only meaninglessness, nothingness. This nothingness can be experienced in anguish but this experience cannot find an objective expression: because it cannot be made in detachment. Man freely originates meaning, he originates the horizon, the absolute presupposition, the ideal, the project within which understanding and life are possible. Man is man by virtue of such a horizon-forming project, of an unsupported project, of a thrown project. More precisely man always lives already within such a horizon without being aware of its character; he takes his world as simply given; i.e. he has lost himself; but he can call himself back from his lostness and take the responsibility for what he was in a lost, unauthentic way. Man is essentially a social being: to be a human being means to be with other human beings. To be in an authentic way means to be in an authentic way with[44] others: to be true to oneself is incompatible with being false to others. Thus there would seem to exist the possibility of an existentialist ethics which would have to be however a strictly formal ethics. However this may be, Heidegger never believed in the possibility of an ethics.

To be a human being means to be in the world. To be authentic means to be authentic in the world; to accept the things within the world as merely factual and one's own being as merely factual; to risk oneself resolutely, despising sham certainties (and all objective certainties are sham). Only if man *is* in this way do the things in the world reveal themselves to him as they are. The concern with objective certainty necessarily narrows the horizon. It leads to the consequence that man erects around himself an artificial setting which conceals from him the abyss of which he must be aware if he wants to be truly human. To live dangerously means to think exposedly.

We are ultimately confronted with mere facticity or contingency. But are we not able and even compelled to raise the question of the causes of ourselves and of the things in the world? Indeed we cannot help raising the questions of the Where[45] and Whither, or of the Whole. But we do not know and cannot know the Where and Whither and the Whole.[46] Man cannot understand himself in the light of the whole, in the light of his origin or his end. This irredeemable[47] ignorance is the basis of his lostness or the core of the human situation. By

making this assertion existentialism restores Kant's notion of the unknowable thing-in-itself and of man's ability to grasp the fact of his freedom at the limits of objective knowledge and as the ground of objective knowledge. But in existentialism there is no moral law and no other world.

It becomes necessary to make as fully explicit as possible the character of human existence; to raise the question what is human existence; and to bring to light the essential structures of human existence. This inquiry is called by Heidegger analytics of *Existenz*. Heidegger conceived of the analytics of *Existenz* from the outset as the fundamental ontology. This means he took up again Plato's and Aristotle's question what is being? What is that by virtue of which any being is said to be?[19] Heidegger agreed with Plato and Aristotle not only as to this, that the question of what is *to be* is the fundamental question; he also agreed with Plato and Aristotle as to this, that the fundamental question must be primarily addressed to that being which *is*[5] in the most emphatic or the most authoritative way. Yet while according to Plato and Aristotle to be in the highest sense means to be always, Heidegger contends that to be in the highest sense means to exist, that is to say, to be in the manner in which man is: to be in the highest sense is constituted by mortality.

Philosophy thus becomes analytics of existence. Analytics of existence brings to light the essential structures, the unchangeable character of existence. Is then the new Philosophy in spite of the difference of content, objective, rational philosophy, comparable to Kant's transcendental analytics of subjectivity? Does not the new philosophy too take on the character of absolute knowledge, complete knowledge, final knowledge, infinite knowledge? No—the new philosophy is necessarily based on a specific ideal of existence. One cannot analyze existence from a neutral point of view; one must have made a choice which is not subject to examination in order to be open to the phenomenon of existence. Man is a finite being, incapable of absolute knowledge: his very knowledge of his finiteness is finite. We may also say: commitment can only be understood by an understanding which is itself committed, which is a *specific*[5] commitment. Or: existential philosophy is subjective truth about the subjectivity of truth.[48] To speak in general terms, rational philosophy has been guided by the distinction between the objective which is true and the subjective which is opinion (or an equivalent of this distinction). On the basis of existentialism what was formerly called objective reveals itself to be as[49] superficial—problematic; and what was formerly called subjective reveals itself as profound—assertoric, with the understanding that there is no apodicticity.

The great achievement of Heidegger was the coherent exposition of the experience of *Existenz*.[5] A coherent exposition based on the experience of *Existenz*;[5] of the essential character of *Existenz*.[5] Kierkegaard had spoken of existence within the traditional horizon, i.e. within the horizon of the traditional distinction between essence and existence. Heidegger tried to understand existence out of itself.

Yet the analytics of existence was exposed to serious difficulties which eventually induced Heidegger to find a fundamentally new basis, that is to say, to break with existentialism. I shall mention now some of these difficulties. 1)—Heidegger demanded from philosophy that it should liberate itself completely from traditional or inherited notions which were mere survivals of former ways of thinking. He mentioned especially concepts that were of Christian theological origin. Yet his understanding of existence was obviously of Christian origin (conscience, guilt, being unto death, anguish). 2)[50] The fact that the analytics of existence was based on a specific ideal of existence made one wonder whether the analysis was not fundamentally arbitrary. 3—The analytics of existence had culminated in the assertion that there can be no truth and hence no *to be*, if there are no human beings, while there can be beings (for example the sun and the earth), if there are no human beings. This is hard: that there should be beings without that by virtue of which beings are. 4—The highest form of knowledge was said to be finite knowledge of finiteness: yet how can finiteness be seen as finiteness if it is not seen in the light of infinity?[19] Or in other words it was said that we cannot know the whole; but does this not necessarily presuppose awareness of the whole? Professor Hocking stated this difficulty neatly as follows: désespoir presupposes espoir and espoir presupposes love; is then not love rather than despair the fundamental phenomenon? Is therefore not that which man ultimately loves, God, the ultimate ground? These objections which Heidegger made to himself were fundamentally the same objections which Hegel had made to Kant. The relation of Heidegger to his own existentialism is the same as that of Hegel to Kant. The objections mentioned would seem to lead to the consequence that one cannot escape metaphysics, Plato and Aristotle. This consequence is rejected by Heidegger. The return to metaphysics is impossible. But what is needed is some repetition of what metaphysics intended on an entirely different plane. Existence cannot be *the*[5] clue, the clue to the understanding of that by virtue of which *all*[5] beings are. Existence must rather be understood in the light of that by virtue of which all beings are. From this point of view the analytics of existence appears still to partake of modern subjectivism.[51]

I have compared the relation of Heidegger to existentialism with the relation of Hegel to Kant. Hegel may be said to have been the first philosopher who was aware that his philosophy belongs to his time. Heidegger's criticism of existentialism can therefore be expressed as follows. Existentialism claims to be *the* insight into the essential character of man, the final insight which as such would belong to the final time, to the fullness of time. And yet existentialism denies the possibility of a fullness of time: the historical process is unfinishable; man is and always will be a historical being. In other words existentialism claims to be the understanding of the historicity of man and yet it does not reflect about its own historicity, of its belonging to a specific situation of western man. It becomes therefore necessary to return from Kierkegaard's

existing individual who has nothing but contempt for Hegel's understanding of man in terms of universal history, to that Hegelian understanding. The situation to which existentialism belongs can be seen to be liberal democracy. More precisely a liberal democracy which has become uncertain of itself or of its future. Existentialism belongs to the decline of Europe or of the West.[52] This insight has grave consequences. Let us look back for a moment to Hegel. Hegel's philosophy knew itself to belong to a specific time. As the completion or perfection of philosophy it belonged to the completion or fullness of time. This meant for Hegel that it belonged to the post-revolutionary state, to Europe united under Napoleon—non-feudal, equality of opportunity, even free enterprise, but a strong government not dependent on the will of the majority yet expressive of the general will which is the reasonable will of each, recognition of the rights of man or of the dignity of every human being, the monarchic head of the state guided by a first rate and highly educated civil service. Society thus constructed was the final society. History had come to its end. Precisely because history had come to its end, the completion of philosophy had become possible. The owl of Minerva commences its flight at the beginning of dusk. The completion of history is the beginning of the decline of Europe, of the west and therewith, since all other cultures have been absorbed into the west, the beginning of the decline of mankind. There is no future for mankind. Almost everyone rebelled against Hegel's conclusion, no one more powerfully than Marx. He pointed out the untenable character of the post-revolutionary settlement and the problem of the working class with all its implications. There arose the vision of a world society which presupposed and established for ever the complete victory of the town over the country, of the Occident[53] over the Orient[53]; which would make possible the full potentialities of each, on the basis of man having become completely collectivized. The man of the world society who is perfectly free and equal is so in the last analysis because all specialization, all division of labor has been abolished; all division of labor has been seen to be due ultimately to private property. The man of the world society goes hunting in the forenoon, paints at noon, philosophizes in the afternoon, works in his garden after the sun has set. He is a perfect jack of all trades. No one questioned the communist vision with greater energy than Nietzsche. He identified the man of the communist world society as the last man, that is to say, as the extreme degradation of man. This did not mean however that Nietzsche accepted the non-communist society of the nineteenth century or its future. As all continental European conservatives he saw in communism only the consistent completion of democratic egalitarianism and of that liberalistic demand for freedom which was not a freedom for, but only a freedom from. But in contradistinction to the European conservatives he saw that conservatism as such is doomed. For all merely defensive positions are doomed. All merely backward looking positions are doomed. The future was with democracy and with nationalism. And both were regarded by Nietzsche as incompatible with what he saw to be the task of the twentieth century. He saw the twentieth century to be the age of world wars, leading up to planetary rule. If man were to have a future, this rule would have to be exercised by a united Europe. And the enormous tasks of such an iron age could not possibly be discharged, he thought, by weak and unstable governments dependent upon democratic public opinion. The new situation required the emergence of a new aristocracy. It had to be a *new*[5] nobility, a nobility formed by a new ideal. This is the most obvious meaning and for this reason also the most superficial meaning of his notion of the superman: all previous notions of human greatness would not enable man to face the infinitely increased responsibility of the planetary age. The invisible rulers of that possible future would be the *philosophers*[5] of the future. It is certainly not an overstatement to say that no one has ever spoken so greatly and so nobly of what a philosopher is as Nietzsche. This is not to deny that the philosophers of the future as Nietzsche described them remind much more than Nietzsche himself seems to have thought, of *Plato's*[5] philosophers. For while Plato had seen the features in question *as*[5] clearly as Nietzsche and perhaps more clearly than Nietzsche, he had intimated rather than stated his deepest insights. But there is one decisive difference between Nietzsche's philosophy of the future and Plato's philosophy. Nietzsche's philosopher[54] of the future is an heir to the Bible. He is an heir to that deepening of the soul which has been effected by the biblical belief in a God that is holy. The philosopher of the future as distinguished from the classical philosophers will be concerned with the holy. His philosophizing will be intrinsically religious. This does not mean that he believes in God, the biblical God. He is an atheist, but an atheist who is waiting for a god who has not yet shown himself. He has broken with the biblical faith also and especially because the biblical God as the creator of the world is outside the world: compared with the biblical God as the highest good the world is necessarily less than perfect. In other words the biblical faith necessarily leads according to Nietzsche to other-worldliness or asceticism. The condition of the highest human excellence is that man remains or becomes fully loyal to the earth; that there is nothing outside the world which could be of any concern to us—be it god or ideas or atoms of which we could be certain by knowledge or by faith. Every concern for such a ground of the world as is outside of the world, i.e. of the world in which man lives, alienates man from his world. Such concern is rooted in the desire to escape from the terrifying and perplexing character of reality, to cut down reality to what a man can bear—it is rooted in a desire for comfort.

The First World War shook Europe to its foundations. Men lost their sense of direction. The faith in progress decayed. The only people who kept that faith in its original vigor were the communists. But precisely communism showed to the non-communists the delusion of progress. Spengler's *Decline of the West* seemed to be much more credible. But one had to be inhuman to leave it at Spengler's prognosis. Is there no hope for Europe and therewith for mankind?

It was in the spirit of such hope that Heidegger perversely welcomed 1933. He became disappointed and withdrew. What did the failure of the Nazis teach him? Nietzsche's hope for[55] a united Europe ruling the planet, for[55] a Europe not only united but revitalized by this new, transcendent responsibility of planetary rule had proved to be a delusion. A world society controlled either by Washington or Moscow appeared to be approaching. For Heidegger it did not make a difference whether Washington or Moscow would be the center: "America and Soviet Russia are metaphysically the same." What is decisive for him is that this world society is to him more than a nightmare. He calls it the "night of the world." It means indeed, as Marx had predicted, the victory of an evermore urbanized, evermore completely technological, west over the whole planet—complete levelling and uniformity regardless whether it is brought about by iron compulsion or by soapy advertisement of the output of mass production. It means unity of the human race on the lowest level, complete emptiness of life, self perpetuating routine without rhyme and reason; no leisure, no concentration, no elevation, no withdrawal, but work and recreation; no individuals and no peoples, but "lonely crowds."

How can there be hope? Fundamentally because there is something in man which cannot be satisfied by this world society: the desire for the genuine, for the noble, for the great. This desire has expressed itself in man's ideals, but all previous ideals have proved to be related to societies which were not world societies. The old ideals will not enable man to *overcome*[5] the power, to *master*[5] the power of technology. We may also say: a world society can be human only if there is a world culture, a culture genuinely uniting all men. But there never has been a high culture without a religious basis: the world society can be human only if all men are genuinely united by a world religion. But all existing religions are steadily undermined as far as their effective power is concerned, by the progress towards a technological world society. There forms itself an open or concealed world alliance of the existing religions which are united only by their common enemy (atheistic communism). Their union requires that they conceal from themselves and from the world the fact[56] that they are *incompatible*[5] with each other—that each regards the others as indeed noble, but *untrue*.[5] This is not very promising. On the other hand,[57] man cannot make or fabricate a world religion. He can only prepare it by becoming receptive to it. And he becomes receptive to it if he thinks deeply enough about himself and his situation.

Man's humanity is threatened with extinction by technology. Technology is the fruit of rationalism and rationalism is the fruit of Greek philosophy. Greek philosophy is the condition of the possibility of technology and therefore at the same time of the *impasse*[5] created by technology. There is no hope beyond technological mass society if there are no essential limitations to Greek philosophy, the root of technology, to say nothing of modern philosophy. Greek philosophy was the attempt to understand the whole. It presupposed therefore that the whole is intelligible, or that the grounds of the whole are essentially intelligible: at the disposal of man as man—that they are *always*[5] and therefore in principle always *accessible to man*.[5] This view is the condition of the possibility of human mastery of the whole. But that mastery leads, if its ultimate consequences are drawn, to the ultimate degradation of man. Only by becoming[58] aware of what is beyond human mastery can we have hope. Transcending the limits of rationalism requires the discovery of the limits of rationalism. Rationalism is based on a specific understanding of what being means, viz. that to be means primarily to be present, to be ready at hand and therefore that to be in the highest sense means to be always present, to be always. This basis of rationalism proves to be a dogmatic assumption. Rationalism itself rests on non-rational, unevident assumptions: in spite of its seemingly overwhelming power, rationalism is hollow: rationalism itself rests on something which it cannot master. A more adequate understanding of being is intimated by the assertion that to be means to be elusive or to be a mystery. This is the eastern understanding of being. Hence there is no will to mastery in the east. We can hope beyond technological world society, for a *genuine*[5] world society only if we become capable of learning from the east, especially from China. But China succumbs to western rationalism. There is needed a *meeting*[5] of the west and of the east. The west has to make its own contribution to the overcoming of technology. The west has first to recover within itself that which would make *possible* a meeting of west and east. The west has to recover within itself its own deepest roots which antedate its rationalism, which, in a way, antedate the separation of west and east. No genuine meeting of west and east is possible on the level of present day thought—i.e. in the form of the meeting of the most vocal, most glib, most superficial representatives of the most superficial period of both west and east. The meeting of west and east can only be a meeting of the deepest roots of both.

Heidegger is the only man who has an inkling of the dimensions of the problem of a world society.

The western thinker can prepare that meeting by descending[59] to the deepest roots of the west. Within the west the limitations of rationalism were always seen by the biblical tradition. (Here lies the justification for the biblical elements in Heidegger's earlier thought.) But this must be rightly understood. Biblical thought is one form of Eastern[60] thought. By taking the Bible as absolute, one blocks the access to other forms of eastern thought. Yet the Bible is the east within us, within[61] western man. Not the Bible as Bible but the Bible as eastern can help us in overcoming Greek rationalism.

The deepest root of the west is a specific understanding of being, a specific experience of being. The specifically western experience of being led to the consequence that the ground of grounds was forgotten and the primary experience of being was used only for the investigation of the beings. The east has experienced being in a way which prevented the investigation of beings and

therewith the concern with the mastery of beings. But the western experience of being makes possible in principle, coherent speech about being. By opening ourselves to the problem of being and to the problematic character of the western understanding of being, we may gain access to the deepest root of the east. The ground of grounds which is indicated by the word being will be the ground not only of religion but even of any possible gods. From here one can begin to understand the possibility of a world religion.

World Religion

The meeting of east and west depends on an understanding of being. More precisely it depends on an understanding of that by virtue of which beings are—esse, être, to be, as distinguished from entia, étants, beings. Esse as Heidegger understands it may be described crudely and superficially and even misleadingly, but not altogether misleadingly, by saying that it is a synthesis of Platonic ideas and the biblical God: it is as impersonal as the Platonic ideas and as elusive as the biblical God.

two traditions: fusion

NOTES

1. "compare" has been changed by hand by the insertion of the capital letter. The period at the end of the previous word "warning" is the editors' correction of a comma that seems to have been left uncorrected in the typescript.

2. "thinking" added by hand to replace "theoretical" which has been crossed out.

3. In the typescript the previous sentence ends after the word "observer," and the new one begins with the words "For instance, the. . . ." The punctuation and capitalization have been changed by hand.

4. Continuation of the old paragraph in the typescript, but with a marginal indication by hand for a new one.

5. Underlining added by hand.

6. "Weber's" added by hand to replace "his" which has been crossed out.

7. "to limit the comparison to the remark" added by hand to replace "to say" which has been crossed out.

8. Word added (in the margin or between the lines) by hand.

9. "in" added by hand to replace "the" which has been crossed out.

10. The word "that" before "the" has been crossed out.

11. "indicated" added by hand to replace "meant" which has been crossed out.

12. The comma after "*pragmata*" and the words "things which we handle and use" have been added by hand.

13. The word "rationalistic" has been changed to "rational" by hand by crossing out the letters "istic."

14. The word "I'm" has been replaced by "I am" by hand, by crossing out " 'm " and adding "am" above the line.

15. "of" added by hand to replace "about" which has been crossed out.

16. "Kant" added by hand to replace "Heidegger" which has been crossed out.

17. In another typescript, but not one that gives any clear indication of having been seen by Professor Strauss, this word has been changed by an unknown hand to "cowered." This other typescript, which has been circulating among Professor Strauss's students for some years, is the one from which Thomas Pangle worked in editing this lecture for *The Rebirth of Classical Political Rationalism*.

18. "character" added by hand to replace "possibility" which has been crossed out.

19. The question mark has been added by the editors to correct a period in the typescript.

20. "of" added by hand to replace "about" which has been crossed out.

21. The word order here has been changed by hand. The original typed phrase is "so radically the intellectual orientation."

22. "and in a most general way" added by hand.

23. The typescript has the words "low land" which have been joined into a single word by hand.

24. "which permeated the work" added by hand.

25. "1953" added by the editors to correct "1952" in the typescript.

26. The words "as Nietzsche does" have been replaced by "as passionately as Nietzsche did" by hand, by adding "passionately as" after "as" and by crossing out "does" and adding "did" above the line.

27. "a" added by hand to replace "the" which has been crossed out.

28. "to" has been changed by hand by the insertion of the capital letter. The period at the end of the previous word "nobility" is the editors' correction of a comma that seems to have been left uncorrected in the typescript.

29. "his" added by hand to replace "the" which has been crossed out.

30. "and" has been changed by hand by the insertion of the capital letter. The period after the previous word "problem" is a correction by hand of the original comma.

31. The dash has been inserted by hand.

32. The words "as follows" have been added by hand.

33. "this" added by hand to replace "the" which has been crossed out.

34. "was" added by hand to replace "is" which has been crossed out.

35. The word "is" has been added by hand, though not, it seems, by Professor Strauss's hand.

36. The typescript referred to in note 17 apparently has the word "mind," confirmed as such by an unknown hand, instead of "understanding."

37. The words "we cannot refer to the true metaphysical and ethical teaching available in any of the great thinkers of the past. It is admitted that" have been added by hand, though not by Professor Strauss's hand.

38. The typescript referred to in note 17 has the word "sciences" instead of "scientists."

39. The semicolon after "groundless" and the words "we are thus led" have been added by hand to replace "and leads us" which has been crossed out.

40. The word "him" before "that" has been crossed out.

41. "doctrine" is the reading of the typescript referred to in note 17. It is included by the editors as a correction for the word "doctrines," which appears in the primary typescript.

42. The word "Yet" before "our" has been crossed out and the capital letter in "Our" has been inserted by hand.

43. "As I said," added by hand. A capital letter at the beginning of "sometimes" has been removed by the editors.

44. "with" added by hand to replace "to" which has been crossed out.

45. The other typescript referred to in note 17 has the word "Whence" instead of "Where."

46. The other typescript referred to in note 17 has the word "whence," in brackets, instead of the phrase "Where and Whither and the Whole."

47. The other typescript referred to in note 17 has the word "irremediable" instead of "irredeemable." The editors suspect that this is the correct reading.

48. The words "about subjective truth" have been replaced by "about the subjectivity of truth" by hand, by adding "the" after "about," by crossing out the final "e" in "subjective" and adding the letters "ity" above the line, and by adding "of" between "subjectivity" and "truth."

49. This word is enclosed in parentheses inserted by hand.

50. "2)" added by hand to replace "Secondly," which has been crossed out.

51. Quotation marks have been added, by an unknown hand, around the words "modern subjectivism."

52. The words "or of the West" have been added by hand.

53. The words "Occident" and "Orient" have been inserted by hand above the typed words "west" and "east," which have not, however, been crossed out.